

Chapter VI

One hundred per cent rough pupils



TOLERANCIA CERO

Technical Education National School. Industrial No. 2. One hundred per cent rough pupils. They tattle about women, football, pubs, fights. There isn't any conversation without knocking, gross insulting. Breaks with pushing each other continually.

Contests of farting and guffaw on free times. Contests of urinating farther in the bathrooms. Contests of louder spitting or belching. Contests of foul mouthing and insulting on speaking.

One hundred per cent rough pupils.

No weeping, no forgiving, and “please” doesn't exist. An ex-Army sergeant behaves like a Warden-in-Chief. His daily exhort doesn't last less than 20 minutes to pupils lined up on the playground under a scorching sun. He's worried about the high number of pupils showing key-rings “taken” from cars. He snatches them away from those who are exhibiting them. The neighbours around the school close up their houses and shops pull down the shutters when at 5 o'clock in the afternoon they leave school. One hundred per cent rough pupils.

A handful of cooking salt and a nine volt battery in the water of the loo.

The unaware person who uses it receives a very painful discharge in his penis. Anyway, whoever is at the orinals, will hardly avoid to be pushed forward interrupting the relieving act. One hundred per cent rough pupils.

Foul scented little bombs to stop exams. Fire crackers under the desk of who is studying. Fresh varnish on the seat of someone wearing new clothes. Shit into a just bought briefcase.

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I'm at the Industrial No.2 against my wishes. My father decided I should become a mechanical technician. I prefer psychology and I've a bias towards philosophy and literature. But nobody cares what I want.

Rough boys divided in “lepers” and “outcasts”. They fight furiously among themselves at the end of Gymnastics classes. They don't care football. They merely hate those who think differently from them. I, myself, hate them. They don't even try to improve themselves, to be better....They only want to prevail, to terrify like beasts.

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Slowly but surely, I'm cutting off from them. I'm not coarse, rough and foul-mouthed. Soon after I'm branded. It's shouted from the roof-tops that I prefer Wagner to Cumbias. It mustn't be. I'm the different, the odd, the soft, the sissy, the pusher....

They even react furiously when I get good marks. Pieces of chalk and rubber crash against my cervix. Slaps on my nape, jeers, nicknames, insulting remarks that hurt and crush. Not even my family's privacy is respected.

Sorrow, helplessness, and crying in the corners. (silently).

I try to sit back-seat, like a loafer, chow toothpicks, spit far, belch loudly, listen to Cumbia.

It isn't me. I'm myself!!!, Damn!!!, Damn!!!.

Jorge Martínez, son of a very important ironmonger put a puffed preservative in the grey-headed English teacher's bag. Somebody takes my rag-pet (petete) from my school bag.

They toss it up laughing at me until it's lost. I found it in the litter-bin quite near "teacher's" bag just when she returns.

She opens her bag. What a big row!!!. The self-named Warden-in-Chief Sergeant, roars and howls violently. The class stops frozen. Everything turns round the question: "Who did it?" "Who did it?" "Who did it?"

As there are no answer, threats arise. "Fifteen low-marks to each one of you", he growls. Ninety per cent of us may repeat the course. Great upheaval!!!

After two hours they let us go to the playground. On coming back they all perfectly know who did it. Somebody "betrayed" Martinez and he goes to the "Head's office".

While I'm waiting for the bus, I feel a hand on my shoulder. On turning round I see a "pock-marked face", a classmate "one of the worst", who kicks me at the same time he says:

- "We know it was you who sneaked Martinez"
- "What?!"

He kicked me with a metal tipped shoe. On my seat, in the bus I see an ecchymosis as big as an egg on my leg and a little blood dripping in my sock.

- "What stupidity did he say?" "That I betrayed him?"

Nobody greets or speaks to me the following day. I'm quiet, until some friendly undetected voice warns me:

- "All of them are going to bash you!! Beware!!!"

However, nothing happens for two days. On the contrary, they don't even talk, sneer or bully me. There's silence around me. And I also feel well. But on the third day, I detected the terrible moment is near. Today, at the third hour of class, the professor isn't coming, so we have free time.

I'm ready, it's hot, however I'm wearing an extra sweater, to soften the blows "Will it work?". I peep at my watch and I'd like to stop the time and the watch-hands.

My heart beats louder and louder. I'm scared, terribly scared.

The free time starts. Sitting on the first desk, I don't dare to look around me. I've got my mouth dry, my stomach seems empty and my breathing difficult.

They talk among themselves quietly. Too quietly !! It's the lull before the storm. The warden is bored and leaves the classroom. (Our Father who art in the Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name...)

Suddenly, all of them hushed. I'm stunned and breathless (Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on Earth as it is Heaven...")

"What will happen to me?"

- "Damn sneak", shouts one of them.
- "I didn't do it..."

I couldn't say anything to them. A hard and sharp blow on my back between my shoulder blades.

They are all around me, blows and bumps on my head; pa, pa, pa, pa, Blows and blows hammered on my body. I bend down and cover my head with my arms.

He, who started striking, keeps beating me with sadistic joy. He's the one who hurts me more. The others on both sides of my back, also beat me furiously.

My head shakes and blows makes me dizzy. My face itches. They are also kicking me, but it isn't so painful. Back, head, arms, legs. Everything bounces. Everything is repeated mockingly.

- "When will they stop?" "Oh God!!! When will they stop?"

All of them ran to their seats. The strikes were loud and very noisy and the warden heard them. When he returns, all of them show their best face of "It wasn't me". Except me who is twisting painfully. He points to me, and who knows why, unjustly, yells in my face:

- "You've got five low marks to provoke such a mess in class".

Everybody laughs. Branded, beaten, reprovved. It's impossible to prove them it wasn't me. I'm quite ashamed to be so unfit in managing myself in life.

I cry and twist in pain, but I'm me and this is my greatest palliative.

It's terribly difficult to arrive home. To the intense pain, not only on my back but all over my body as well, I'm suffering awful nauseas. My urine is bloody. I don't tell anybody because I had to explain lots of things and I'd only be rejected!! Somehow I go to my bed and lie down on as long as I am...

In my dream, I can see a woman with plaited long black hair and pink dress I'm lying on the floor. She bends down and whispers in my ear:

- "Don't allow that people's wickedness, snatches your kindness away.

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